

TAMPER EVIDENT LABEL AND METHOD FOR USING A TAMPER EVIDENT LABEL

The present invention is directed to a tamper evident label, and more particularly, to a
5 tamper evident label including tear guide lines or score lines located thereon.

BACKGROUND

It is often desired to send documents and other components in a secure manner using
tamper evident envelopes, packages or other containment means so that any attempted opening
10 or tampering with the containment means is apparent. To that end, various tamper evident labels
and envelopes have been used. However, existing tamper evident labels and envelopes may be
able to be relatively easily defeated, and may not provide clear evidence of attempted opening or
tampering. Accordingly, there is a need for an improved tamper evident label.

15 SUMMARY

The present invention is a tamper evident label which is difficult to defeat and which
provides clear visual evidence of any attempted tampering or opening of the associated envelope,
package or containment means. In particular, in one embodiment the invention is a tamper
evident label system including a label sheet having an adhesive located thereon and at least one
20 tear guide line or score line located thereon or therethrough. The label sheet includes indicia
indicating the tamper evident nature of the label.

In another embodiment the invention is a tamper evident label system including a
containment means including a body, an inner cavity having a mouth, and a flap. The flap is
movable between a closed position wherein the flap generally covers the mouth, and an open
25 position wherein the flap generally does not cover the mouth, and the flap is located in the closed
position. The system further includes a label sheet having an adhesive located thereon and at
least one tear guide line or score line located thereon or therethrough. The label sheet is adhered
to the flap and to the body to maintain the flap in the closed position.

Other objects and advantages of the present invention will be apparent from the following
30 description and the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a front view of one embodiment of the tamper evident label of the present invention;

Fig. 2 is a side view of the tamper evident label of Fig. 1.

5 Fig. 3 is a front view of a sheet of labels;

Fig. 4 is a front view of an alternate embodiment of the tamper evident label of the present invention;

Fig. 5 is a rear view of an envelope in its open position;

10 Fig. 6 is a rear view of the envelope of Fig. 5 in its closed position and with a tamper evident label fixed thereto; and

Fig. 7 is a rear view of the envelope of Fig. 6, with the flap opened.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

As shown in Figs. 1 and 2, the tamper evident label of the present invention, generally
15 designated 10, includes a label sheet 12 that is, in one embodiment, generally rectangular in top or front view. However, the label sheet 12 may take a wide variety of forms or shapes besides rectangular, including but not limited to square, circular, triangular, hexagonal oval, irregular, etc. The label sheet includes a text side 14 and an adhesive side 16. The text side 14 may include various indicia 18 located or printed thereon which indicate the tamper evident nature of
20 the label 10. For example, the indicia 18 may include text such as "tamper evident," "tamper resistant," "tamper proof," "confidential," etc. If desired, a sheet of labels 10 may be provided (Fig. 3), each label 10 being die cut and secured to a release liner 20 so that each label 10 can be easily separated from the release liner 20 (i.e., by manually peeling the labels 10). Fig. 3 illustrates a sheet having six labels 10. However, it should be understood that the sheet may
25 include more or less labels located thereon, including ten labels or various other numbers of labels.

The label sheet 12 may include an adhesive located on its adhesive side 16 to enable the label sheet 12 to be adhered to a substrate. The adhesive may be any of a wide variety of adhesive or binding means, and may include pressure sensitive adhesives, adhesives which
30 require water to be activated, or various other adhesives. The adhesive is preferably a relatively strong adhesive such that when the adhesive (i.e., label sheet 12) is secured to the surface or

substrate (such as an envelope or other paper or paper-based products), any attempted removal of the label sheet 12 will cause the label sheet 12 and/or substrate to tear or fragment before the adhesive releases. For example, when the label sheet 12 is adhered to paper, cardboard or the like, any attempted removal of the label sheet 12 will cause tearing, marring, marking or separation of the paper or cardboard substrate, or of the label 10. Thus, for example, the adhesive may have a peel force of three to four or more pounds per label measured perpendicular to the orientation of label 10 on a stainless steel base member.

The label sheet 12 may be made of any of a wide variety of materials including plastic, papers, foils and polymers, such as polyester films, polymers and vinyl chloride, polyethylene, polypropylene and the like. The indicia 18 may be printed with various inks or dyes, including water-insoluble inks, pigments, or the like.

As shown in Fig. 1, the label sheet 12 may include a plurality of tear guidelines or score lines 22 located thereon. In the illustrated embodiment, wherein the labels 10 are rectangular, the tear guidelines 22 are diagonally oriented; that is, each tear guideline 22 extends from a corner (or edge) of the label sheet 12 towards the center of the label sheet 12. Each tear guideline 22 may be spaced away from the outer perimeter of the label sheet 12. Each tear guideline 22 is a cut or an area of weakness or the like such that the tamper evident label 10 is tearable along the tear guideline 22 and/or along the ends of the tear guidelines 22. Thus, for example, the tear guidelines 22 may be perforation lines, areas of weakness, fold lines, score lines (cut either fully or partially through the thickness of the label sheet 12) and the like.

The shape and arrangement of the tear guidelines 22 may vary from that shown in Figs. 1-3. For example, Fig. 4 illustrates an alternate embodiment of the label 10 wherein the tear guidelines 22 are two generally perpendicular intersecting tear guidelines 22 forming a generally "+" shape. The tear guidelines 22 may be desired to be arranged so as to allow the label 10 to be relatively easily torn along the tear guidelines 22 while simultaneously not significantly compromising the stiffness of the label 10 for ease of handling.

The tamper evident label 10 of Figs. 1-4 may be used with an envelope, package, bag, file, folder, notebook, box, book, pouch, pocket, portfolio or other containment means 30, an example of which is shown in Figs. 5-7. In particular, the envelope 30 may include an envelope body 32 having an inner cavity 34 and a mouth 36 which provides access to the inner cavity 34. The envelope 30 may include a flap 38 which is movable between an open position (Fig. 5)

wherein the flap 38 generally does not cover the mouth 36, and a closed position (Fig. 6) wherein the flap 38 generally covers the mouth 36.

In order to utilize the tamper evident label 10 of Figs. 1-4 with the envelope 30 of Fig. 5, the envelope 30 is moved to its closed position. The tamper evident label 10 is then applied to the envelope 30, adhesive side 16 down, to adhere the label 10 to the envelope 30. The label 10 should be applied such that the label 10 is adhered to both the flap 38 and the body portion 32 of the envelope 30 as shown in Fig. 6.

When the label 10 is securely adhered to the envelope 30, any attempted removal of the label 10 will generally result in tearing of the envelope 30 and/or of the label 10. For example, any attempted opening of the envelope 30 (i.e., attempted opening of the flap 38) may cause the label 10 to tear, for example, along the upper two tear guidelines 22, as shown in Fig. 7. Thus, the label 10 provides evidence of the tampering, or attempted tampering, of the envelope 30.

The diagonal configuration of the tear guidelines 22 allows the tamper evident label 10 to tear along a path to separate the label 10 into upper and lower fragments. Furthermore, the shape and arrangement of the diagonal tear guidelines 22 provide sufficient tear guidelines 22 to allow the label 10 to be relatively easily torn, but does not include so many tear guidelines 22 so as to compromise the strength of the label 10 which would make the label 10 difficult to handle and apply to the envelope 30. Furthermore, when using the label 10 of Figs. 1-3, the upper tear guidelines 22 may be generally aligned with the lower edge of the flap 38 (which is generally "V"-shaped) such that attempted opening of the envelope 30 allows the label 10 to easily tear along the upper tear guidelines 22. In this case, the two upper tear guidelines 22 are generally "V"-shaped, although the two upper tear guidelines 22 (or in fact any of the other tear guidelines) may be combined into a single tear guideline rather than being separate, discrete tear guidelines.

Having described the invention in detail and by reference to the preferred embodiments, it will be apparent that modifications and variations thereof are possible without departing from the scope of the invention.

What is claimed is: